

A
CHARGE
RELATIVE TO THE
ARTICLES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
DELIVERED TO THE
CLERGY
OF THE
ARCHDEACONRY OF WORCESTER
IN THE YEAR MDCCCLXXII.

And Published at their Request.

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Reverend Brethren,

THE Attack publicly made upon the Articles of the Church of *England* must of Necessity have engaged your Attention ; and the invidious Reflections which, in Defiance of all Decency and Charity, have been cast upon those who have given their Assent to them, must have quickened this Attention in all who have any Degree of Sensibility or Concern for their Reputation. Indeed the Charge brought against us is of so serious a Nature, and is made with such an uncommon Degree of Confidence, that it behoves us to consider well upon what Ground we stand. It amounts in Fact to this ; --- “ That no Man of Sense can “ believe the Articles, and no honest Man can “ subscribe to them.” It is however some Consolation to us, under this heavy Imputation to reflect, that if we cannot escape Abuse, we are abused in good Company ; as we are in this Respect no more deficient in Point of Sense and Honesty, than many of the most illustrious Men that this or any other Nation ever produced ; Men of the greatest Abilities and Integrity ;

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whose whole Lives were employed, with the Advantages of every Kind of subsidiary Learning, in a laborious Study of the Scriptures:--- Some, who were engaged in the great and arduous Work of the Reformation of Religion; and others who have defended that Reformation by Writings, which will convey their Memories to Posterity with Honour. Indeed, the Names of *Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Jewel, Hooker, Chillingworth*, at the Head of a thousand more that will dignify the Catalogue, are so respectable and venerable, that a modest Man of inferior Attainments would almost be inclined to take up the Sentiment of the Young Man* in CICERO, *Errare mehercule malo cum Platone, quam cum istis Vera sentire*. This at least he may think and say,---That no Man need be *ashamed* of holding Opinions in Matters of Religion which they maintained; and that if no Reproach can be cast upon him which will not fall with equal Weight upon them, all such Reproach is *honourable*.

But it was their Misfortune it seems, to have lived in Times of Ignorance and Restraint, from which the present Age enlightened by

* The Letters *A*, and *M*, which mark the Dialogue in the *Tusculan Questions*, denote *Adolescens* and *Magister*. Vide Bentley's *Philol. Lips.*

new Discoveries, and uncontrouled in the free Exercise of Reason, is happily disengaged. Practical Religion, I may venture to affirm, has gained no Ground from the Improvements of the Times; neither can I persuade myself that our modern Refinements have at all mended the System of our Faith in it's Principles or Doctrines. They have been of little Use to our best and ablest Divines down to the present Times, who have all along adhered to the Platform of Religion as settled by our first Reformers. Such as have either compiled regular Systems of our Faith, or have explained particular Branches of it, have, in general, maintained in many excellent and applauded Writings on a great Variety of Subjects, which all together take in the whole Plan of our Religion, a perfect Agreement with the Articles of our Church. This could not have happened if these Articles had proposed to their Acceptance many absurd and unscriptural Propositions. These Writers certainly had Sense enough to know what was *rational*, and Learning enough to discover whether the Articles *contradicted the Scriptures* or not. They were Men of too much Virtue and Honour to be charged with *Hipocrisy*; and too wise and sensible to be misled by *Prejudice*. Candour and even Justice will oblige us to suppose, that their Judgment in Matters which

they appear to have well considered and understood had confirmed the Principles of their Education. But it is the common Cant of Scepticism to attribute the Reception of established Doctrines, merely because they are established, to Prejudice or something worse; whilst every extravagant Notion of a fanciful Brain shall be the Offspring of unprejudiced Reason, whenever it contradicts a received Opinion.

These Reflections are intended to bespeak a more favourable Acceptance of my present Discourse; wherein I shall endeavour to explain the more obnoxious Articles of our Church, by such fair and equitable Rules of Interpretation as will prove them to contain, in Conjunction with the rest, a rational and consistent Scheme of Christian Doctrine, agreeing in every Point with the Scriptures. And if this Undertaking may be of Use to remove any disquieting Doubts or Suspicions which the confident Assertions of our Censurers may have raised in any of your Minds, I shall not have bestowed my Pains, nor You your Attention in vain.

An Opinion has been taken up, and much Stress has been laid upon it, that all the Articles

cles of the Church of *England* must be interpreted in one certain determinate Sense, which can be no other than that of the Compilers of them; and that unless we certainly know what that one Sense is, and take them in that Sense, we cannot in Conscience subscribe to them. Now those that are best acquainted with the History of the Articles know very well, that some of the principal Compilers of them were of different Opinions concerning the Doctrines contained in some of them; and that they were *purposely* expressed in such Terms as do not fix one precise definitive Sense on those Parts of Scripture upon which they are founded. Mr. Fuller in his *Church History*, in Answer to those “ who taxed the Composers for “ too much Favour extended in their large “ Expressions clean through the Contexture of “ of the Articles,” observes, “ That they were “ penned in comprehensive Words to take in “ all who differing in the Branches, meet in “ the Root of the same Religion.” They evidently intended such a Latitude as would admit the Assent of moderate Persons of what was afterward called the *Arminian* as well as of the *Calvinistic* Persuasion, yet so as exclude the extravagant Notions of each Party. Notwithstanding therefore the hard Names that have been given to some religious and conscientious

encious Men for having made Use of their Liberty in this Matter, I am fully persuaded that different Persons may with a safe Conscience subscribe in different Senses, to those Articles, which are not so definitively expressed as to ascertain precisely the Doctrines they propose, provided they interpret them soberly, and consistently with the general purport of the Articles. There is no Prevarication in this, if they only take the Liberty which it was the intention of the Compilers to allow them. And that it was their intention to allow this liberty to *others* is plain, because they took it *themselves*; having *knowingly* (as they could not be ignorant of each others Sentiments.) received several of the Articles under different Explanations of the Doctrines they contain*.

* Those that will not allow the Authority of the Declaration of K. James I. must allow it to be an Evidence of the early and general opinion that prevailed as to the claim of the Latitude here mentioned. It sets forth, that there was a Difference among Churchmen in some *curious* points, wherein they *all took the Articles of the Church of England to be for them*, and upon that account they *all willingly subscribed to them*. — It is intimated in the same Declaration that the Articles were intended “*to conserve and maintain the Church in the Unity of true Religion and in the Bond of Peace.*” And how are we directed to maintain this Unity? The Act of the 13 Elix. c. 12. forbids any Ecclesiastical Person “*to maintain or affirm any Doctrine directly contrary or repugnant to any of the XXXIX Articles.*” Different Expositions of Articles purposely formed in general terms and with a latitude of Expression are by no means *directly contrary* to them. Before and after this Act was made, very eminent Men in the Church understood some of them differently; which occasioned the Declaration of K. James I. to forbid Disputes about them, enjoining them

This was evidently the Case in respect to third Article, *Of Christ's Descent into Hell*. Our Reformers very well knew that the Fathers and several learned Men had given very different Explanations of this Article of the Creed, and it is probable they understood it in different Senses themselves. And therefore they have left every Man at liberty to receive it in whatever Sense he thinks the best, and most analogous to the Christian Faith; having purposely struck out the passage originally inserted in it which confined it to one particular Sense.

We may find an instance of the same Kind in the *seventeenth Article concerning Predestination and Election*; which has often been cast in our teeth as maintaining the rigid Doctrines of rank Calvinism, which we are not supposed to admit. Predestination is so defined in this Article as to make no express mention of the Decrees of God being founded in his Foreknowledge of, and having respect to, the Qualifications of the Elect. The Reason of it

them to be received generally as those parts of Scripture were to be received upon which they were founded, in order to preserve the *Peace of the Church*, where a *Unity of Opinion* was not expected to be maintained in curious and not necessary points of Doctrine. The Rule intended to be observed (and a very good Rule it is.) was this; *In necessariis Unitas, in non-necessariis Libertas, in omnibus Charitas.*

appears

appears to have been this. Good Works were supposed to make a principal Part of these Qualifications : And there being different Opinions in regard to the Efficacy of such Works as pertaining to Grace and Salvation, they were *omitted* in the Article but not *excluded* : --- *Omitted* ; to satisfy those who were jealous of giving the least encouragement to the Popish Doctrine of Merit : --- but not *excluded* ; so as to countenance the Notion that the Decrees of God were arbitrary, without any Respect to Mens Actions and Behaviour. For that it did *not exclude* the respect which the Divine Prescience has to the use of Man's Free-will in Concurrence with the Operation of Grace is evident from the other Parts of the Article. For it says, the Elect of God *obey the Calling through Grace*. There must therefore be a Concurrence of their own Will in this Obedience ; otherwise it would not be Obedience, but unavoidable Necessity. It guards the Doctrine against the pernicious Effects of Presumption and Despair, the certain Consequences of a supposed absolute Predestination ; and then tells us, “ that the Promises of God are to be received *generally*, as “ they are proposed to us in the holy Scriptures.” Here is no particular Limitation of the Promises of God ; and therefore the Article

ticle may be received, as it was intended to be received, by Persons who interpret the Scriptures *differently*, but not *dangerously*, as to the Extent of Gods Purposes of Salvation.* This Article will meet us again in another view which will give it still less of a Calvinistic Appearance.

Having said thus much concerning the Latitude of Explanation intended to be allowed by the Compilers of the Articles, and which of consequence we have a right to take, I shall proceed to lay down some Rules necessary to a right Interpretation of them, which I shall exemplify by some particular Articles that are deemed most liable to Exception. And these Rules will be such as must confessedly be observed in the Exposition of the Scriptures

* This matter is more fully explained in the *Reformatio Legum*, the Ground work of the XXXIX Articles compiled by our first Reformers in Edw. VI reign, and in which Peter Martyr, a moderate Calvinist, had a hand; Calvin himself having offered his Assistance, which to his great mortification was rejected. The Article of Predestination having set forth, "that the Consideration of it requires in us the greatest Exactness and Perfection of Virtue, and depresses all vain and presumptuous Thoughts of our own Sufficiency; and that God never ordains any Thing unjustly, nor compels any Man to Sin," adds in the close of it these Words: *Quapropter omnes admonendi sunt, ut in actionibus suscipiendis ad Decreta Prædestinationis se non referant, sed universam Vitæ suæ rationem ad Dei Leges accomodent, cum et promissiones Bonis et minas Malis in Sacris Scripturis generaliter propositas contemplentur.*

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themselves, and indeed in the equitable Construction of any Body of Laws or Statutes whatsoever.

The first Rule is, “that a Consistency
“throughout must be preserved in our Expla-
“nations, and one Article must not be so un-
“derstood as to set it at variance with itself,
“or with any other Article.”

Thus, if we are at a loss to know in what Sense we are to understand the 20th Article, when it says “that *the Church has Authority in Controversies of Faith*,” let us take in the latter part of it, and compare it likewise with those which immediately precede and follow it. If by the *Church* is meant the Representative of the visible Church of Christ in a General Council, the 21st Article declares, that these not only may err, but actually have erred *in Matters of Faith*, and consequently cannot have Authority to bind their Decisions upon all Christians. If it means a *Church*, as I suppose it to mean, as defined in the 19th Article “to be a visible Congregation of the
“Faithful, in which the pure Word of God
“is preached, and the Sacraments rightly ad-
“ministered according to Christ’s Institution,” we are there told that this Church may err
even

even in *Matters of Faith*; and it instances in the Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch as well as Rome. And I never heard that the Church of England ever laid any claim to Infallibility. Yet this Church in the 20th *Article* asserts its Authority in settling controverted points of Faith; but observe, that it is under this declaration, which saves the Rights of private Judgment, “that it cannot *decree* “any thing contrary to the written Word of “God, or *obtrude* any thing upon others as “necessary to Salvation, that cannot be proved “thereby.” In what Sense then are we to understand that the Church declares herself consistently with those other Articles, “to “have Authority in Controversies of Faith?” She confines herself to those within her own Pale: She arrogates no Authority to herself but what she allows to all other Christian Churches; namely, that she has a Right to settle that Formulary of Doctrines which all who profess themselves to be of this Church are obliged to receive, and that she has a Right to require from whatever Members of it she thinks fit a formal Assent to the Articles of Faith which she has established. She has taken great pains and care to frame them agreeably to the true Doctrines of Scripture, to which she makes the Appeal *always* to lie: And if

any one thinks them not to be so, she does not compell him to embrace them, but if he openly rejects them, she asserts her undoubted Right not to receive him as one of her Communion.

Let us, if you please, turn to the 31st Article, and see what Assistance it will give us in the Explanation of some others. This Article declares, “ that the Oblation of Christ “ was a perfect Redemption, Propitiation and “ Satisfaction for *all* the Sins of the *whole* “ *World*, as well Original as Actual.” Now I cannot consistently with this Doctrine possibly interpret the 17th Article concerning Predestination so as to exclude any Person whatsoever from the benefits of this expiatory Sacrifice by a supposed absolute, unconditional, irreverfible Decree of God, fubfifting from all Eternity. Not a fingle Person is excluded by the former Article from the benefits of Chrift’s Redemption; the latter therefore does not only not require, but will not allow me, to receive it in a Senfe which of neceffity fhuts out the greater part of the World from a poffibility of Salvation*. I am not authorifed by

* The Notion of *Universal Redemption* runs through all the Offices of our Liturgy, which may be confidered, in general, as the beft Comment upon the Articles, and a fure Criterion of the Senfe of the Compilers of them; and wherein we do not find

any of our Articles to search into the Decrees of the Almighty, as they respect the final state of particular Persons. *They stand or fall to their own Master.* I acquiesce, as I am directed by the Articles to do, in the general Declaration of God's Promises and Threats, and in the Assurance which the Scriptures give me, that *the Judge of all the Earth will do Right, and that he will reward every Man according to his Works.*

Nor can I interpret the 10th Article, of *Free-will* in a Sense that favours the Doctrine of unconditional Decrees by supposing Man to have nothing to do, but to be merely passive in the Work of his Salvation. The Article itself is perfectly agreeable to the Doctrine of St. Paul, who does not make the Operation of the Divine Grace to be a Reason for our doing nothing for ourselves, but on the contrary, it is the very Reason given *why we should work out our own Salvation.* For tho' our own

find the least Countenance given in any one instance to the rigid Notions of Calvinism. The point of *Universal Redemption* is the chief Article of the Dispute betwixt the Arminians and Calvinist, and (as the learned Dr. Whitby observes.) *draws all the rest after it.* The Church therefore in this leading and fundamental point of all, opposes in direct terms the Doctrine of Calvin. — For a full satisfaction in this matter, I must refer the Reader to a very learned and judicious Treatise intitled, *An Apology for the Church of England*; Printed by E. Midwinter, London.

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Strength is not sufficient, yet our Weakness will be made strong by the Grace of God disposing us to begin, and enabling us to perform the Work. When I allow therefore that a Man cannot by his own natural Powers make either a Beginning or Progress in the Christian Life without the Grace of God *preventing* or disposing him, and *co-operating* or working with him; as it is evident by the Word *co-operating* that the Article does not reject the Use and Effect of Men's natural Powers in the case, so neither does it restrain the Influence of God's Grace to any particular Persons, but leaves all Men under a capacity of receiving it in such measure as it shall please God to bestow it. The nice Scholastic distinctions concerning the Metaphysical Nature, Kinds, and Operations of Grace the Article has no concern with, nor have they any concern with the Faith of a Christian.

It will be a farther Illustration of this Rule of Comparison if we take a view of two other Articles, viz. the 11th and the 12th, which relate to *Justification and Good Works*. By comparing these together we learn what is meant by Justification. Those are said to be *justified*, who are accounted Just or Righteous before God; and such only are they who have their Sins expiated

ted and forgiven, and by that means escape the Severity of the Divine Judgment. They stand acquitted of all their Offences before the Tribunal of God. And what can put Sinful Man in this State but the Oblation of Christ which has made the atonement? But the Application of Christ's meritorious Sufferings belongs to none, who have heard the glad Tydings of the Gospel, but those who believe in him. And therefore Justification is said to be by *Faith*: not as the meritorious Cause, but the instrumental one, by which an Interest in Christ's Merits is conveyed to every sincere Believer. And when Justification is said to be by *Faith only*, as this Proposition does not detract from the Efficacy of Christ's Satisfaction, so neither does it exclude, but on the contrary supposes the necessity of *Good Works*; *i. e.* Works which the Christian Faith lays upon us as a Duty. For the 12th Article declares, that though they have no part in the Expiation of our Offences, yet they are the only Evidences of a justifying Faith, which is the Tree that bears the Fruit. And where the Fruit does not appear, the Tree itself has no Virtue in it, but must be reputed as *dead*. And this clear and indubitable Sense of the Articles reconciles all variance betwixt Faith and Good Works, assigns to each their proper Province,

Province, and stands clear of all those Scholastic Intricacies which are of no use but to perplex and confound the common Sense of Mankind.

A second Rule to be observed in the Interpretation of the Articles is this; “where there
“are any general Positions contained in or re-
“ferred to and confirmed by the Articles,
“which cannot be received but under certain
“Restrictions and Limitations, those Restriction-
“tions and Limitations ought to be made and
“received; just in the same manner as we re-
“ceive many absolute Declarations in the Scrip-
“tures themselves, which no one ever under-
“stands or interprets but under proper Restriction-
“tions and Explanations.” For instance: It is our Saviour’s own Declaration, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Mark 16. 16. This Text is not to be understood as admitting no Exceptions; for we believe that many be saved by the uncovenanted Mercy of God, through the Merits of Christ, who have not believed in him, having never heard of his Name, or who never had the Gospel proposed to them in its true and genuine form. And Baptism is only *generally* necessary to Salvation, there being many possible cases wherein it is not necessary. The
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opinion of our first Reformers, as we find it in the *Reformatio Legum* was this; *Salus illis solùm adimitur, qui sacrum hunc Baptismi fontem contemnunt, aut superbiâ quâdam ab eo, vel contumaciâ, resiliunt.* The same Principle has a claim to be admitted in determining the Sense of those Clauses in the Athanasian Creed which make the Catholic Faith, as therein explained, necessary to Salvation. It cannot be necessary in those who have not capacity and abilities to understand the Intention and Meaning of it*. The Clauses have a respect, as the whole Creed has, to those who, by explaining away the Divinity and Incarnation of Christ, subverted the very foundation of Christianity, which is laid in the Doctrines of Atonement and Redemption. Nor does the Sentence of Condemnation reach even those who might possibly not perceive the evil tendency and consequence of their Errors. An Opinion indeed is Heretical which overthrows any fundamental Doctrine of Religion. But the *Malignity* or *Sinful Nature* of Heresy does

* There are many reasons why the Athanasian Creed should be retained by our Articles; but I could never see the propriety of its having been introduced into our Liturgy, as it cannot be seen in its true light, nor rightly understood, without knowing the Errors which it opposes, and which very few in any Congregation can be supposed to know. I do not find that it makes a part of the Service in any other Christian Church.

not lie in the Errour of the Judgment, but in the pride of the Heart and the perverseness of the Will. Heresies of this kind St. Athanasius may be allowed to call, because St. Peter calls them so, *damnable Heresies, of Men who denied the Lord that bought them*; "Αιρέσεις ἀπωλείας" Heresies of Perdition to those who persisted in them against all rational means of Conviction. 2 Pet. 2. 1. The Apostles Authority will vindicate, under these Restrictions, the Clauses of the Creed.

Apply this Rule likewise to the 9th Article, in which *Concupiscence*, upon the Authority of an Apostle, is said to have *the Nature of Sin*. No fair Interpreter will suppose that either the Apostle or the Compilers of the Articles meant that the Natural Affections and Appetites directed to their proper Objects, and moving in their proper Sphere, must necessarily raise in us Sinful Desires, by which alone they become Sinful themselves. Concupiscence begets *Evil Desires*, and Evil Desires must proceed from an *Evil Principle*. We must Interpret the Article as we do the 10th Commandment.--- And the former part of the Article which relates to the Original Corruption of Man, as the Cause of evil Concupiscence, must be interpreted by the same Rule. It asserts the fallen State of
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Man, and the Great Depravation of every Man's Nature, that is descended from Adam, *inclining him to Evil*; insomuch that the Flesh is represented to be *always* lusting against the Spirit, and every Man is supposed to have a natural propensity to Evil, which working Evil deservedly subjects him to the Divine Wrath and Condemnation. Take this Proposition, as all Propositions *morally universal* are to be taken, as meaning, that a natural Principle of Evil still subsists in *all* Men, and that evil Thoughts and Desires do *frequently* arise in the hearts of the best Men, and *almost perpetually* in the hearts of bad ones, and our own Consciousness and Experience will convince us of the truth of it. And indeed was it not for the intervention of the Divine Grace, more general and powerful perhaps than we are aware of, the Effects of this Depravation might be as bad as they were in the Antediluvian World, when *every Imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Man were only evil continually*; so evil, as to bring down a dreadful Vengeance upon the whole World.

There is yet another Rule which will be of great Use in determining the precise Sense of any Article, which is, "that we must observe
"and have in our View what particular Opi-

“ nion it refers to, and is designed to guard
 “ against and correct.” In many of the Articles, the Errour is specified, and we cannot misunderstand them, if we know what the erroneous Doctrine is that they mean to condemn. Others have respect to erroneous Notions, which they are intended to oppose, though they do not arraign them in form. You will readily perceive that some of the Articles which have been under our Consideration are of this kind. But I shall mention one other in particular, which may seem to stand in need of a satisfactory Explanation more than any of the rest; I mean the 13th, which treats of *Works before Justification*, and concludes them to have the *Nature of Sin*. To explain this we must refer to the Notions which the Popish School-Divines had entertained upon this Subject. It was their Business to give all possible Efficacy to Works, in Diminution, as it was thought to be, of God’s free Dispensation of Grace; in order to support the Doctrine of Merit, of which the Church of Rome had made a very gainful, though shameful, Merchandise. To this Purpose they assigned a Degree of Merit, even to such Works as did not proceed from a Faith in Christ, and gave them *in Effect*, a Title to Saving Grace, under the Distinction of *de Condigno* and *de Congruo*. By this they meant,
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that though Works without Faith, if conformable to the moral Rule, had not a Claim *in strict Justice* to this Privilege, yet there was a Fitness in them which gave them an *equitable Title* to it. In Opposition to this Doctrine, our Reformers disclaiming all Pretensions to any Kind of Merit, which might in the least derogate from the free and undeserved Mercy of God displayed in the Work of Man's Salvation, do not allow any Works of the mere natural Man, independent of the Divine Grace, to have any Merit of *Congruity* in them, on which he might found any Pretensions of a *Title* to the saving Grace of the Gospel. And in this, I am persuaded, they have the whole Tenour of Scripture clearly on their Side.---But they go farther, and say, that they have not only no Plea of *Merit* “ but that they have the Nature “ of *Sin*.” To understand this, we must have Recourse to that well-known and established Maxim in Ethics, *Virtus fit ex integro, Vitium oritur ex quolibet Defectu*. In Works of mere Morality, a good Principle is necessary to denominate any Action a good one; an evil Principle will turn it into a vicious one, though the Action itself may be conformable in other Respects to the Moral Rule. It is the same in Religion as in Morality. And in the Works under our Consideration there are manifest *De-*
fects.

fects. There is supposed to be in them a Want of a true Religious Principle, namely, a Sense of Duty arising from a right Faith in God. They are considered as not proceeding from any Effect of the Divine Grace, but from the mere natural Powers of a Man unjustified, and unregenerate, under the Dominion of Sin, and not sanctified from the Guilt of it. No Moral Defect is taken Notice of. They are not said to have the Nature of *Vice*, in respect of the Moral Rule; but they are said to have the Nature of *Sin*, in respect of the revealed Law of God; because they do not proceed from a right Principle of *Duty*; “are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done;” have no Interest in the Gospel-Covenant, but leave Men still obnoxious to the Guilt and Punishment of their Sins. Had any Moralist said, that any supposed Virtue, as defective in Moral Qualifications as these are in Religious ones, still retained the Nature of a Vice, no one conversant in Ethics would have disputed the Truth of his Assertion.

The Rules of Interpretation I have laid down will give to all the controverted Articles in general a Sense so agreeable to the true Doctrines of the Scriptures, that no one who admits the latter can have any pretences to quarrel with the

the former. Indeed we have too much reason to think that the great Stumbling-block lies in the Scriptures themselves, whose Authority is no farther regarded than they can be made to countenance pre-conceived Opinions ; which they are perverted to do, even where the Language is clear and definitive, and cannot be forced into a complying Sense without violating all the established Rules of the Interpretation of any Writings whatsoever. The most offensive Articles, I apprehend, are part of the 1st, the 2^d, the 5th and the 8th ; three of which establish the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the Divinity of the Son of the Holy Ghost ; and the last adopts the three Creeds ; one of which in particular guards these Doctrines, chiefly, against the Misrepresentations of them by *Arius* and *Sabellius*. I shall only say of them, what the 8th Article says, “ that they may be proved “ by most certain Warrants of Holy Scripture.” And the Presumption in their favour is very strong ; as they have been for Ages received, and are at this day received, by all Christian Churches in the World. And when those who are dissatisfied with them can produce a System of Faith in these points more consonant to the Scriptures, and which is equally reconcileable to the great Mystery of Redemption, and is not chargeable with Consequences more
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inconsistent with the true Principles of Scriptural Christianity than our own, which has never yet been done, it will then, and not till then, be time enough for us to exchange our Faith for theirs.

Let us now for our farther Satisfaction take a general View of that System of Faith which is contained in the Articles of our Church; bearing in our Minds, “ that their chief Aim is “ to give us right Notions of the COVENANT “ OF GRACE, whereby we are intitled to the “ Blessings of Redemption and Salvation, from “ the free and unmerited Mercy of God, thro’ “ the Sacrifice of the Son of God, and by the “ Intervention and Assistance of the Holy Spirit “ of God, who alone can enable us to perform “ our part of the Covenant.” The Summary of it is this.

We believe in one God, and in all his infinite and adorable Attributes and Perfections. We believe in the Divinity of Christ the Son of God, who has the Name, the incommunicable Attributes, and the allmighty Powers of God expressly ascribed to him in the Holy Scriptures. We believe likewise in the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, who is therein distinguished from the Father and the Son, has the

the Essential Powers of the Godhead ascribed to him, and has manifested himself to the World by his Divine Operations. And we receive these Scriptural Distinctions, not as communicating to us any real Knowledge of the *incomprehensible* Essence of the Godhead, but in perfect correspondence with the Unity of the Divine Nature.

We believe that the Son of God was incarnate and made Man, possessed of all the Faculties, and subject to all the Infirmities of Human Nature, Sin only excepted;---that the design of his coming into the World was to redeem Mankind from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin, to restore them to Divine favour, and make them Heirs of Immortality;---that he fulfilled this gracious purpose by offering himself upon the Cross as a full, perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for all the Sins of the whole World;---that we have no *covenanted Claim* to the benefits of this Sacrifice unless we believe in him, and receive him as the Saviour of the World;---and that Mankind had no means of reconciliation to their offended God by any exertion of their own Powers, but are saved from Wrath and Condemnation by him alone.

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We believe this great Salvation to have been founded in the Original Depravity of human Nature, derived to all Men from the Transgression of our first Parents ; --- and that this Evil Root is unavoidably productive of Evil Deeds ; from the actual commission of which the best Men are not entirely free, nor has any Man any thing to restrain him effectually, but the preventing and assisting Grace of God. We do not assert that the Operations of Grace are inconsistent with the Freedom of Man in the use of his natural Powers ; but we are persuaded that he never can use them so as to give him *a Claim or Title by the Gospel-Covenant* to Justification or the free Pardon of his Sins, but by the prevalence of Faith and the Aid of Grace. We believe that this Grace may be complied with or resisted, quenched and recovered by him, and that if it is finally withdrawn it is his own fault ; the Co-operation of Man being, under every dispensation of Grace, so far necessary as to make him in strict Justice accountable for his actions ; which under a compulsive restraint, or necessity, of Action he cannot be.

From the contemplation of the unlimited Prescience of God, and of the Rectitude of his Judicial Proceedings, we believe that he
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knows and has determined from all Eternity, who shall or shall not be partakers of the Glories of his future Kingdom. And we are persuaded that Good Men may find abundant Consolation in reflecting upon the unchangeable and righteous Judgements of the Almighty, whose Purposes will stand from everlasting to everlasting, and *who is the same yesterday and to day and for ever*. But we believe at the same time that this Judgement must have a respect to the Qualifications of Persons, and to a Conduct for which they are accountable. *whom he did "foreknow," them he also did predestinate*. Rom. 8. 29. And we utterly disclaim and renounce the Doctrine of absolute unconditional Decrees, by which Some are created to be eternally happy, and Others eternally miserable without any possibility of changing their Doom, having been shut out by an irreversible Decree subsisting from all Eternity from the benefits of Christs Redemption; we renounce it, I say, as a Doctrine full of Horror and Blasphemy.

We receive God's Promises and Threats as they are *generally* proposed to us in the Scriptures, and as they are the Sanctions of his Laws; leaving the Application of them to God himself the righteous Judge of all. We know the Scriptures were not written to inform

us “whether Many or Few shall be saved,” but “what We must do to be saved.” They have told us this; and our only concern is, “to work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling;” a work which we can neither set about in earnest or perform with Success, unless the Grace of God “worketh in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.” And we believe that this *Grace which is freely offered to all Men* is within the reach of all in such proportion and degree as will “save them from the Wrath to come,” if they will receive it, and suffer themselves to be directed and assisted by it’s Secret and Salutory Influences.

- It was not my Intention to trespass upon your time in drawing out the whole Scheme of the Christian Faith as represented in our Articles, or as it is guarded in them against many pernicious and fundamental Errours. I meant only to take notice of those parts of the Scheme, which the Articles have been some times supposed to have been less happy in the Explanation of. And if I have truly represented the Sense of them, which I am persuaded in my own Mind that I have, I may with great truth and confidence assert, that they contain a System of Doctrines, clear and intelligible, and which no Christian, who founds his

his Faith upon a rational and consistent Interpretation of the Scriptures, can have just reason to gainsay.

It is with pleasure and gratitude we reflect that the late unconstitutional attempts against the Articles of our Religion have not succeeded; which could be made with no other intent, if we suppose the Actors in them to have known what they were about, than to tear up the Establishment of this National Church, root and branch. No particular Congregation of Christians can be formed or subsist without Unity of Opinion in what they deem the Essential points of Faith. An *Establishment* without a Test is an absurdity. Some Test there must be; and the question is, whether that shall be retained which was formed by those to whom we in a great measure owe the very Existence of this Protestant Church, and who learned their Religion from the Scriptures, making their Appeal to them only for the truth of it;---or whether another Test shall be adopted, which will let into the Church (if any Church can be supposed to remain) the most dangerous and powerful Enemies that true Scriptural Christianity ever had?

Whether the Articles of our Church want any Revision must be left to the Judgment of our
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Superiors to determine; who, if the Case requires it, will consider what may reasonably be done to make the Sense of them less liable to Mistake or Misrepresentation, and what ought not to be done in Compliance with the Sceptical Humour of the present Age. Whenever the Times will suffer any thing of this kind to be brought upon the Carpet, without manifest danger of introducing worse disorders into the Church and State too, than the intended Improvements will rectifie or prevent; we trust that the Work will be committed to Men of Religion, Learning, Judgement and Temper, who will be careful to strengthen, and not to weaken the Fences of our established Church so as to lay it open to Men of any Religion or of no Religion at all*. It has had the Approbation and Praises of Persons most distinguished for their Learning and Moderation in other Protestant Communities abroad: It has hitherto been justly esteemed the great Bulwark of the Reformation: And we humbly rely on the good Providence of God, that whatever Alterations it may undergo, it will ever retain the Essential Doctrines and the Constitution of a truly primitive Christian and Apostolical Church.

* *Woolston* himself, for instance, would have Subscribed to the Test proposed by the Petitioners, viz. in his own Allegorical Sense; without believing one Word of the Historical Account of our Saviour's Miracles.

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